the feels...
(kms)

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This play is a play for five performers who feel deeply, who maybe cry without provocation.

One of the performers should be black...ACTOR 1.

One of the performers should have a body that reads as "muscular"...ACTOR 5.

One of the performers should be female.

One of the performers should be queer.

This is less a play & a more a study of an essay I would write were I blessed with the audacity of Audre Lourde or Maggie Nelson.

The Ruminations in Darkness take place in a full blackout.

“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.”
Audre Lorde

“Our feelings are our most genuine paths to knowledge.”
Audre Lorde

"You got the light, count it all joy
You got the right to be mad
But when you carry it alone you find it only getting in the way
They say you gotta let it go"
- Solange, "Mad"

1. (ILY)

Behind a table, a microphone, a bottle of San Pellegrino and a glass sits ACTOR 1. They are black. They exist in a space between male and female. They inhale. They exhale. There is also a big large plastic gun sitting on the table.

ACTOR 1

We see a stage.
Close to bare.
There is a table,
upon which a glass
a bottle of branded sparkling water
and a microphone
sit.
There is an actor
behind this microphone.
Speaking into this microphone.
...
...
...
A couple enters.

Enter Actor 2 and Actor 3.

ACTOR 1

The couple sits together
upon the stage.
They look into each others eyes.
One of them begins to laugh.

ACTOR 2
(laughing)

I love you.

ACTOR 3
(with more weight)

I love you.

ACTOR 2

...
...

...
...
What does that mean?

ACTOR 3

What do you mean,
“what does that mean?”

ACTOR 2

“I love you” ?
...
...
What does that mean?
...
...
for you?
What does it mean?
...
...
...
When I say it
I mean it as a sort of like
as a sort of
catch all phrase.
Like
“I love you!
lol”
It’s like
a placeholder
or a synonym
for something more like
“You exist to me! / In a way--

ACTOR 3

Ok...

ACTOR 2

--“that’s deeply comforting”
...
...
...

Sometimes when you say it
it feels more like
um...
like
for you
“I love you”
is a synonym
...
...
A synonym
for something
akin to:
“I see the parts of you that you don’t see yourself
and I find those parts,
while troubling,
beautiful and uncompromising
and perfect
because they are an aspect of your
‘youness’
that I don’t see when I look at anyone else.”
Does that sound right?
And that scares me
more than you could know
to hear someone imbue “i love you”
with that kind of
sight
and time
It feels all encompassing
and implicating
Of all my faults
and glories
in one turn of phrase.
“I love you”
It makes me shiver
and meditate on
“I love you”
And ponder
what I’ve done to deserve
all
this history
and weight
in three words?
...

...
...
I love you,
lol.

ACTOR 1

Pause.
...
...
...
This is a moment when the playwright would like you to recognize
and wrestle with
the beauty and simplicity of this notion.
His own casual enlightenment
even though it's a rather facile simplification of his own psychology
as it relates to relationships.
...
...

ACTOR 3

Um,
wow..
...
...
That--
That's incredibly unfair.
When I
Like...
When I say
"I love you".
I mean:

Actor 3 takes a HUGE INTAKE OF BREATH THROUGH A WIDE OPEN MOUTH AND OPENS THEIR EYES TO TWICE THEIR NORMAL SIZE AND THEN LETS OUT A LAUGH LACED WITH CHILDLIKE GLEE.

ACTOR 3

...
...
...
...
...

...
...
....
...
...
...
...
...
Does that track?
Do you get that?
I'm not so good with words I--
um...
When I say
"I love you"
I feel a jolt
that splits
me at my gut
sending a wave of feeling up
and a wave of feeling down
so that
when I say
"I love you"
when I say it
and I know it
and I mean it
I feel like
one of those
big crazy
inflatable
doll men
that are at car dealerships
waving around
over a wind machine
my body becomes
floppy for you...
you become my wind when I say "I love you"and mean it.
I love you.
For me
an expression of
"I LOVE YOU"
is more an expression
and
and

Like
a celebration
of my own exhuberance
seperate from you
or your own experience of me saying it.
I love you.

Actor 3 stands up and becomes an inflatable man. Their arms moving independent from their body.

Actor 1 pours the water into the glass and begins to drink.

ACTOR 1

The first lover
stops and admires the second as
they feel in front of them.
It becomes one of those images
that the playwright enjoys very much
one immediately engaged with a sort of poptimism *
and low brow humor
that serves to undercut the self seriousness of his own
metatheatricality.
...
...
...
And this is where the playwright stops
and grabs some Pellegrino
and begins to walk around the room
and tries to pull from the air more
than
just
that
out...

(ACTOR 1 LAUGHS)

There must be more the playwright has to say *
on the subject of
love,
right?

Actor 1finishes the water and grabs the microphone and walks over to the couple, one of whom is looking up at the other who is moving like an inflatable doll thing.

Actor 4 and Actor 5 enter and begin revolving counter clockwise around the perimeter of the main action yelling out to the other from across the space. Actor 1 makes their way back to the table throughout and picks up and plays with the toy gun.

ACTOR 4 & 5

Hey!
Sup?
Not much, u?
Pics?
Looking?
U host?
Hosting.
U top?
420 friendly?
U parTy?
Wanna suck me off?
Can I suck you off?
Into?
Lemme see ur dick.
U bottom?
Masc, top, dl professional here.
Wanna fuck?
Nice ass.
Nice arms.
Nice legs.
Nice dick.
Nice smile.
Hot pic.
U lookin'?
U dl?
Wassup?
hey man.
Looking to try scat play with someone lactose intolerant? Interested?
Into?
INTO?

INTO?
Use my mouth as a toilet.
Let me see ur feet.
BB?
How are u?
How's your night going?
a/s/l?
a/s/l?
a/s/l?
a/s/l?
a/s/l?
a/s/l?

ACTOR 1

I don't think there is
much more
the playwright can say *
about love.
Nothing that goes deeper
than the surface
of the thing.
When the writer
was 13
they asked a stranger, *
28/M/New York,
over AIM
how he knew he was gay. *
As they watched *
their own blinking cursor *
an anxiety
washed over them *
as they waited *
with baited
breath
for an answer that
would undoubtedly confirm their worst fears about themself. *
...
...
...
"I knew when I met a boy
Who I thought about
more than myself...
...

...
that's when I knew.
HAHAHA
I mean,
that's what love is right?
...
...
So tell me about Virginia.
...
..."
Then they logged off. *
The playwright sat
in front of a darkening computer screen
and let out a sigh of relief.
"I guess I'm not gay"
they thought. *
*
*

ACTOR 1 looks around at all the actors staring at them. They let out a glorious guffaw of defeat and lower their head.

ACTOR 1

Literally
KMS.

Actor 1 picks up the toy gun and pulls the trigger. Too much blood should begin to fall from their head as they fall to the floor and bleed out.

ACTORS 2, 3, 4, & 5 laugh in unison, not because of the simulated death but because of their own overwhelming feeling of KMS.

Actor 1 lies on the floor in a pool of their own blood. And opens their eyes.

BLACKOUT.

A RUMINATION IN DARKNESS

I've been sitting in a lot of dark rooms as of late trying to peer through the darkness to see if any light exists in corners that I usually shuffle past.

I've been trying to parse out what it meant for the world that Amiri Baraka wrote *DUTCHMAN* in 1964. The same year that *Hello Dolly!* premiered on Broadway and Arthur Miller's *After The Fall* was staged off it. 1964, the year Byron de la Beckwith was acquitted for the murder of Medgar Evers in Jackson, Mississippi, *The Beatles "i want to hold your hand" became the #1 song in America and Beatlemania moved through the streets from JFK to Atlanta, Georgia, and Cassius Clay changed his name after knocking out Sonny Liston.* What did it mean for him to win an Obie in 1964?

This was the same year Baraka was leaving his Jewish wife to join Malcolm X's newly formed black nationalist party. The same year the Good Friday earthquake happened in Alaska killing 125 people, the same year Goldwater lost to Johnson in a landslide.

What did it mean for the world? For the bodies of three activists who were hitchhiking through Mississippi murdered and beaten by the KKK that a black man wrote a play in New York?

How did he do it? He was an activist, a fighter by his own estimation.

Was it the overwhelming love of the thing itself that made him keep putting the pen to paper and led him to the rehearsal room of the Cherry Lane every day? Or did he really think he was doing a necessary action for the world?

Can any of you tell me what it meant for the world that a black man wrote a play as the world was burning outside the theatre?

Because I'm not sure I know what it means...

END OF
RUMINATION #1

2. (GOALS)

Actor 4 now sits behind the desk and microphone. They are drinking a glass of wine.

Actor 5 stands in their underwear and is slowly lifting a bar bell and doing push ups throughout the scene.

ACTOR 4

Another actor stands on stage now
in a state of undress
they are
“working out”
an activity the playwright is
in sore need of taking up. *

ACTOR 5

I fucking hate my body
it’s disgusting.
Truly.
There are societal values in place that make my body
seem like it’s a body I should love
but I know the truth of my body.
How I forget to eat
constantly
How I smoke
and
drink.
Constantly.
How I’m a drug addict.
How I’m going to get a fucking ULCER!
How my teeth disgust me.
My own fucking teeth disgust me.
How there was a time,
for a full week
where all I ate were olives
and hummus.
Not because I was impoverished
but because that’s all I wanted.
I sometimes wonder...
I,
I,
I,
I go down google dark holes,

And end up with questions like
“How do you know if you have MALE anorexia?”
Because
There’s so little actual research on male anorexia
or eating disorders
that I could very well have some version of it and not know it.
...
...
...
I’m also a hypochondriac.
...
...
...
I self-diagnose to an insane degree.
...
...
...
This next part isn’t about my body
per se
but it is about a self diagnosis.
Ok,
ok,
Once
when I was 16
after seeing American Psycho and loving it
but also recognizing
something of myself in it
I asked my therapist at the time:

ACTOR 4

A 16 year old enters
with their therapist. *

Actor 2 and Actor 3 enters.

ACTOR 2
(as 16 year old)

Do you,
uh,
do you think I could be a sociopath?

ACTOR 3
(as therapist)

A sociopath?

...
...
...
Do you think you're a sociopath?

ACTOR 2

Um....
maybe?
I looked it up,
on WebMD and
I have all the symptoms.

ACTOR 3

What're the symptoms
in your mind?

ACTOR 2

Feeling bored by everything
and everyone around you.
Um...
irresponsibility
manipulativeness?
Inability to suppress compulsions!
Feeling anger!
Feeling discontent!
...
...
Deceitfulness.
I'm such a good liar.
No one can ever tell
and yeah...
I don't know.

ACTOR 3

Well in my understanding
the, uh
sort of
self-reflection ?

required
to recognize in ones' own psyche
the symptoms of
of
of
sociOpathy [*pronounce the word wrong]*
would uh...
yeah...
they wouldn't be there.
So.
In my estimation,
you're not a sociopath.
I'd be kind of a bad therapist
if I hadn't notice that before today.

ACTOR 2

But what if all of this was a manipulation
though?
and I
knew you would say that
I wasn't a sociopath
if I told you I thought I was a sociopath
so I told you
so that I could go through the next two years of meeting with you
without you ever being able to say it first.

ACTOR 3

...
...
...
Well,
then
I guess I'd say we could unpack it more.
Was this a manipulation?

ACTOR 2

I'm a sociopath.

ACTOR 4

They exit.
...
...
...

The playwright has recently become enthralled
with autofictions.
The mixing of memoir and fiction
that moves both forms
to a new space
or onto new topographies of truth.
It's very French.

ACTOR 5

I do love some things about my body.
I can put anything on it and people think it looks inspired,
because I'm tall
and thin
in a way that rides the line
between masculinity
and femininity
just enough to be fashion
but just shy of being FASHION!
You know?
Which is disappointing because that means I'll never be able to be a model
but I also know I wouldn't be happy as one.
I like my eyes
and my mouth
my lips
they're expressive
which only sucks because I can never really hide how I feel about a thing.

Actor 5 begins to cry.

Actor 4 pours more wine for themself and downs it.

ACTOR 5

I only have my mother to blame
for the failures of my body.
She gave me this height
and this face
according to all my family...

Actor 1 enters.

ACTOR 1

You look just like 'ronica.
Just like her.

She was so pretty.
Them cheek bones?
Yep.
You got em.
WE USED TO CALL HER OLIVE OIL
From Pop-Eye?
OLIVE OIL
Cuz she was so skinny.
No you ain't olive oil
You JJ, Good Times.
Dynomite.
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

Actor 1 exits.

ACTOR 5
(still crying)
But I only have my mother to blame...
for the failures of my body.
She let me sit inside all day
nose in books
because she capitulated
to the failures of my mind.
My OCD.

My deep anxieties
and allowed me to hide away inside all day
away from the dirt
and pavement
and boys
and spit
and boys
and splinters
and scrapes
and boys
and bikes
and balls
and bats
and boys
and fists
and kicks
and fights
and running
and panting
and boys
and
and
and
and.
...
...
...
In favor of books
and bedrooms
and books
and make believe
and books
and British boys with wands
and books
and British girls in Wardrobes
and books
and American boys in space
and books
and American boys with Negro companions
and books
and Latin men on horses
and books
And British women afraid of ghosts

And books
And Japanese children with a dead black pilot
And books
and sadness
and books
and loneliness
And books imagined jubilation
And books
and books
And books
And books
and
and
and
and
and
...
...
...
I coveted the honor.
Of being the one with the books.
Who knew too much.
Now I just want to love my body.
Nobody wants to fuck a book.

ACTOR 4

The actor falls into puddle of
their own tears
so depleted is their body
by this expulsion of
both energy
and emotion.
Meanwhile
I'm behind a desk
and the playwright is in a cafe
and you're in your seats
and somewhere
just over there
a drone is circling a village.
KMS.

Actor 4 begins to cry.

They cry.

And they cry.

And they cry.

Actors 1, 2, and 3 re enter. Actor 5 stands up. They all begin to cry.

Actor 4 looks around at all of them then breaks the wine glass they have been drinking from and stab themself in the neck.

BLACK OUT

RUMINATION IN DARK #2

THESIS FEEDING INFO:

To see a play is to engage in a luxury activity.

The most radical thing a playwright can do is make a play that's purely for their own enjoyment and enlightenment.

Playwrights are the storytellers to the oppressors. We exist to pleasure, titillate, and challenge them (but only so much).

Was HAIR revolutionary or did it comment on a revolution?

What we do is not noble it's for them.

I will sample THE AMERICA PLAY and talk about how the only transformative piece of theatre in American history is OUR AMERICAN COUSIN.

Will ponder what type of play I can write to get an American president into a theatre. And what my theatrical assassination of him could look like. How I could possibly get away with it.

To write plays for the oppressor as the world is on fire right outside because of matches that line their pockets is to be an enactor of your own death. It's literally the epitome of KMS. *And that's ok.* Plays don't change the world they can only

maybe change my relationship to it.

END OF
RUMINATION

3. (IDGAF) *

Actor 2 sits on the floor now. There is an * unmarked clear jug of liquid in front of them. *
*
They speak into the microphone. *

ACTOR 2 *
The playwright has been pondering *
amidst an avalanche of ponderances *
the fact *
that they still haven't written *
have refused to write *
their *
"family play". *
The playwright *
wonders *
if this is because *
of the fractures *
fissures *
in their own? *
Or if this is *
just *
a matter of taste. *
... *
... *
... *

Well not taste, *
per se, *
the playwright *
has espoused *
many times *
that a direct influence *
on their taste *
their work *
was an orphan *
adopted by rich parents *
who wrote *
family dramas *
ripping apart *
and reforming *
those parents *
into the monsters that appeared to him *
when the lights were turned off *
and no one was home but him. *
... *
... *
Two actors enter. *

Actor 5 and Actor 4 enter. Actor 5 has a belt in his hand. *

Actor 4 seems 10,11. *

Actor 5 snaps the belt. *

Actor 4 screams. *

*

ACTOR 5 *
Why you so scared? *

ACTOR 4 *
Because you’re about to beat me. *

ACTOR 5 *
What makes you say that? *

ACTOR 4 *
I see a belt in your hand. *

ACTOR 5 *
You can’t always believe what you see. *

ACTOR 4 *
You about to beat me? *

ACTOR 5 *
Nobody’s bout to beat nobody. *

Actor 5 snaps the belt again. *

Actor 4 screams. *

ACTOR 5 *
Get over here! *

ACTOR 4 *
(scared) *
You’re bout to beat me. *

ACTOR 5 *
Nobody’s bout to beat nobody. *
Get *
over *
here. *

Actor 5 snaps the belt. *
*
Actor 4 screams. *
*
Then begins to walk over. *

ACTOR 5 *
Sit. *

Actor 4 walks to get a chair. *

ACTOR 5 *
Where you going? *

ACTOR 4 *
To get a-- *

ACTOR 5

I SAID SIT!

Actor 4 flinches.

Actor 5 points to the spot in front of him.

ACTOR 4

Where?
On the floor.

ACTOR 5

On floor?
No.
You ain't animal.
Animal they bark
and mew
and paw at the earth
on a terrain free of love.
This space right here,
this chair?
It's love.
You gonna sit here.
Right in front of me.
In this chair.

ACTOR 4

But I don't see a chair.

ACTOR 5

Love ain't something you see.
...
...
(Actor 5 snaps the belt)
Right here,
sit.

Actor 4 walks over.

They looks from Actor 5 to the empty air in front of him.

They sits as though in an invisible chair. It will be uncomfortable. *

Actor 5 walks around him. *

ACTOR 5 *
Put your hands out in front of you. *
Straighten your back. *
Sit. *
Like. *
A. *
Man. *

This should continue even as Actor 4's knees begin to tremble and shake. *
*
If Actor 4 falls, Actor 5 should snap the belt. Actor 4 will scream. Actor 5 should say, "sit". Then continue to revolve around Actor 4 adjusting their posture. *

ACTOR 2 *
The playwright *
questions the black family's *
position *
in the context of "drama". *
How does one expose *
and untangle *
reform *
and reshape *
traumas *
of the individual *
when the collective trauma *
of blackness *
constantly supercedes *
and mutates *
the trauma *
Into a beast *
one couldn't fathom. *
Perhaps that's why we're all so afraid of the dark. *
That's where monsters hide. *
*

Actor 1 and 3 enter. *

ACTOR 3 *
I don't get scared often. *

ACTOR 1 *
I'm thirsty. *

ACTOR 3 *
One of the first movies I saw *
in the theatre *
was Child's Play 3. *
I sat alone in the dark *
with a big smile across my face the whole time. *
... *
... *
... *
This demented doll *
reanimated with the soul of a serial killer *
by a spell from a Voodun / *
priest who-- *

ACTOR 1 *
Baby! *
Get mama something to drink. *
I'm so parched. *

Actor 3 goes to pour Actor 1 a drink from the *
jug as Actor 3 continues to speak excitedly *

ACTOR 3 *
There was something *
so exciting to me *
about *
this doll *
that housed a man *
who was attempting to return to his life as a serial killer *
by possessing the soul *
and mind *
of a child. *
Here, mama. *

They pass her what they just poured from the *
jug. *

ACTOR 3 *
I think that's why I've never / been *

ACTOR 1 SCREAMS!!!!!!!! *

ACTOR 1 SCREAMS!!!!! *

Actor 3 looks around not knowing what to do. *

Everyone stops and looks at Actor 1 as they * scream bloody murder. *

ACTOR 2 *
The playwright *
The black playwright *
wishes *
they knew *
how to separate the traumas of their life *
from the traumas that *
formulated that life. *
But the thought of this is more frightening *
than the *
Memory that grabbed hold of the black playwright *
a few days ago *
of the playwright *
As *
a child *
staring down at their mother *
as she *
screamed *
and writhed *
upon the parquet floor *
of their foyer *
after swallowing bleach *
that had been poured from a jug *
beneath the kitchen sink. *
The playwright *
eyes wide *
and paralyzed *
by the thought of *
calling 911 *
and not being able to explain *
What it was *
she'd done. *

...
...
KMS.

Actor 2 stands up and looks at Actor 1
who is still struggling to breathe
on the floor.

Actor 2 shivers with fear.
It's too much.
Actor 2 reaches over, picks up the jug.
Throws it upon their face.

They scream.
They swallow rest of the jug.

They scream and vomit
at the same time.

They die.

Actors 1, 3, 4 and 5 all look at Actor 2's body
and are consumed by fear. They look over their
shoulder and scream. They look at each other
and scream.

They scream until all the fear of their eventual
KMS consumes them.

RUMINATION IN DARKNESS #3

I was asked to write the memo I feel the American theatre had sent me about how to be a successful playwright. This is all I could think of:

To be black and a playwright is to be forgotten if you cannot be commodified.
Find a black brand. Stick to it.
Your plays will be produced in February or at the end of the season…
Scare white audiences just enough but don't luxuriate in your rage. Demand sympathy that you rage.
Know that your blackness must be palatable to be successful.
Know that your queerness must be simple to be successful.

Write the black gay play they want not the one you want.
Know that if you have a moment it will be grand but momentary.

END OF
RUMINATION

3. (FML) *

There is no desk now. *
*
Just a microphone. *
*
Actor 3 sits far downstage. *

ACTOR 3 *
There is no desk now. *
Just a microphone. *
And me. *
Sitting right on top of you. *
... *
... *
... *

Actor 3 begins to smile and lick their lips in a * style reminiscent of Gene Simmons. Actor 3 * throws the microphone into the middle of the * room. *

ACTOR 3 *
There’s no microphone either. *
Just me. *
Only me. *
Right here. *
On top of you. *
and you *
and you *
and you. *

*
*
Then Actor 3 begins to head bang. *

ACTOR 3 *
UH *
UH UH *
UH UH UH *
UH UH UH UH *
UHHHHHHHHHHHH *
... *
... *
... *
The playwright *
is listening to a song *
right now that *
you *
do *
cannot *
hear. *
It's very metal *
in its sensibilities. *
You can see me dance *
MOSH *
and hear from my mouth *
that there *
are drums colliding *
with a synth *
and guitar *
filtered through static *
and screams. *
The playwright loves to mosh. *

Actor 3 dances and bangs their head, and *
dances. *

ACTOR 3 *
It's embedded in a cold, removed violence *
and you *
can't *
hear it *
The playwright does, *
can though *
and *
the playwright wants you to try *
to hold *
the idea of that sound in your head. *

A song that sounds *
like a throat gripped by *
death. *
*

ACTOR 3 SCREAMS IN SOMEONE'S FACE. *
*
Actor 3 stops head banging. *
*
Actor 3 breathes and stares at each every *
audience member before: *

ACTOR 3 *
From Stage Right *
a man enters *
in a tall hat *
with a chair. *
... *
... *
... *
This man doesn't have to be black *
but it would be helpful. *
Perhaps? *
This scene is scored *
by the song the playwright is listening to. *
Try to hold it in your head. *
Don't interpret this. *
This is a sample. *
Of a sample. *
Of a sample. *

Actor 1 drags a chair onto the stage. They sit *
with their back to the audience. *

ACTOR 3 *
Another actor enters *
from Stage Left *
with a gun. *

Actor 2 enters with a gun and points it at Actor *
1. *

ACTOR 1 *
Ready. *

ACTOR 2

HAW HAW HAW HAW HAW!

Actor 2 shoots. Actor 1 slumps over in his chair.

ACTOR 2

THE SOUTH IS AVENGED!!!
SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS!!!
...
...
...
Thank you.

ACTOR 1

Pleasures mine.

ACTOR 2

Till next week?

ACTOR 1

Till next week.

Actor 2 goes to leave but barely leaves the stage.

ACTOR 3

This repeats.
For a while.
As does the song.
Hold it there.

In your head.

Perhaps this will help you.

...

Another actor stands by the actors performing
and begins to play the song
the playwright hears in their head.
This is an illustration
being drawn with a body.

The actors *
are also aware that the song is very loud. *
So they compensate for that. *
Till the playwright gets bored of it. *
DO NOT INTERPRET THIS *
THERE IS NO INTERPRETATION TO BE HAD HERE. *
THIS IS JUST A WHIM. *

Actor 5 enters and begins to play the song that * has been described on air guitar/air synth/air * drums. *

Each time the scene is repeated it becomes more * and more wild and insane. Have fun. *

ACTOR 1 *
Ready. *

ACTOR 2 *
HAW HAW HAW HAW HAW! *

Actor 2 shoots. Actor 1 slumps over in their * chair. *

ACTOR 2 *
THE SOUTH IS AVENGED!!! *
SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS!!! *
... *
... *
... *
Thank you. *

ACTOR 1 *
Pleasures mine. *

ACTOR 2 *
Till next week? *

ACTOR 1 *
Till next week. *

ACTOR 3 *
Don’t interpret this! *
*

Actor 2 shoots. Actor 1 slumps over in their chair *

Actor 3 *

ACTOR 3 *
What did I say??? *

ACTOR 1 *
Ready. *

ACTOR 2 *
HAW HAW HAW HAW HAW! *

Actor 2 shoots. Actor 1 slumps over in their chair. *

ACTOR 2 *
THE SOUTH IS AVENGED!!! *
SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS!!! *
... *
... *
... *
Thank you. *

ACTOR 1 *
Pleasures mine. *

ACTOR 2 *
Till next week? *

ACTOR 1 *
Till next week. *

ACTOR 3 *
Are you even still listening to the song? *
Can you still hear it? *

Actor 3 head bangs again. *

ACTOR 1 *
Ready. *

ACTOR 2 *
HAW HAW HAW HAW HAW! *

Actor 2 shoots. Actor 1 slumps over in their chair. *

ACTOR 2 *
THE SOUTH IS AVENGED!!! *
SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS!!! *
... *
... *
... *
Thank you. *

ACTOR 1 *
Pleasures mine. *

ACTOR 2 *
Till next week? *

ACTOR 1 *
Till next week. *

Actor 4 runs to middle of the stage... *
*
They pick up the microphone. Ready to speak. *

ACTOR 3 *
A solo: *

*

Actor 4 begins to speak over the scene that is still being repeated behind them. *
*
There is a shift in the room as though the stage has begun to boil up and over. *

ACTOR 4 *
I've been a very rewarded troll. *
My whole life. *
Literally *
I learned very early on *
that the more cynicism I brought to a project *
the more *
those in charge of my life *
applauded it. *

When I was in 6th grade *
Mrs. Bailey *
my social studies teacher *
called an emergency meeting with my mother. *
I was so scared. *
We were all supposed to do a project *
on what we found beautiful *
about all these different *
Caribbean countries *
and people *
wrote essays about the food *
and people wrote essays about the dances *
and Carnival. *
And I came in with a french flag I had sewn *
with the help of my mother's friend *
Vickie from Church *
and I did a report on the Haitian revolution of 1791 *
partially in Haitian Creole. *
Then I lit the flag on fire. *
My teacher had freaked out *
and told me I had to go to *
Mrs. Wright *
the guidance counselor *
and Mrs. Wright had spoken to me *
about why I did it *
and where I had learned the french and creole *
and then she gave me some paper and told me to write. *
So at this meeting I thought for sure they were going to kick me out of school. *
This was my first, and only, public school so i wasn't sure of the customs *
what the "principal" would say. *
Etc. *
But when my mom sat down with Mrs. Bailey *
Mrs. Bailey told my mom, *
"Jeremy is like a rose in a garden full of thorns. *
We have to cultivate him. *
What he did yesterday was very special. *
Jeremy, *
You're very special." *
Mrs. Bailey put me in the advanced social studies course *
and the "gifted and talented" program *
for the remainder of my time at that school. *

I saw on facebook this year that she believes that
BLUE LIVES MATTER.

Actor 4 begins to vocalize the song that Actor 5 has been playing into the microphone.

The room feels like the fire that pops up around the bottom of a pot on a gas stove when boiling water begins to slosh about it.

Actor 3 begins to move around the space head banging towards the mic.

Once they arrive they begin to sing a new song:

ACTOR 3

WHAT
DID
I
I
I
I SAY???
STOP
STOP
STOP
STOP
STOP
STOP
INTERPRETING THIS!!!!
KMFS!

Actor 3 bludgeons themself to death with the microphone as they mosh.

Actors 1, 2, 4, and 5 mosh and scream.

BLACKOUT.

RUMINATION IN THE DARK #4

...
...

...
...
...
When you play in the dark there is an unrelenting breathlessness that takes hold as the moon disappears behind the trees and beneath the clouds. There is a thrill to this play. Something arresting and thrilling in the black of the night.
...
...
...
Yet the black play is constantly asked to be languid, poetic. The unrelenting, the breathless black or brown for that matter is constantly shuddered and hidden away even when it's celebrated.

What of the night?

I want to ask.

What of the night?

The dark play that take holds when the violence we feel consumes us.

In the light is where we allow ourselves to saunter.

The dark is where we speed up.

END OF RUMINATION

5. (STFU)

Actor 5 sits beneath a microphone. Somewhere farther upstage and possibly hidden SR or SL. They are on their back and talking up into the microphone a la Kanye West's JESUS WALKS performance at SNL's 50th anniversary.

As they speak the other performers prepare the set for a standard living room drama.

ACTOR 5

Enter players
changing a space
crafting it into a place.
As artifice
slowly melts away
is hidden.
Or is it?
...
...
...
Stop interpreting this...
...
...
...
The playwright is thinking a lot about dreams.
They woke up on expensive sheets this morning *
-800 thread count-
with the clearest remembrance
of his dreams
In months.
This feels to be a trend.
The more expensive the sheets
the more clear the REM cycle.
This is something the playwright feels they remember knowing *
even though it's probably
Just a convenient fact.
The playwright tends to write down their dreams *
when they wake *
if they remember them. *
The following is a collection of their dreams. *
Like that one Kurosawa film
the playwright watched with their crush freshman year *
in Chicago.
Or more actually like the Joan Jonas Volcanic Saga
that they watched with their crush this year *
in New Haven.
The playwright wonders why this is in the play at all?
Dreams always sound like lies
you're telling
to someone else, they've always thought. *

As they sit in on a couch in a living room, miming drinking tea each of the actors begins to engage in telling their dreams from written down notes on notepads.

Actor 5 gets up and joins the rest of the cast on the couches.

ACTOR 1
It's weird, isn't it?

ACTOR 2
It's not weird at all.
I wish I had that level of commitment to my subconscious.

They all laugh.

ACTOR 4
What does your therapist think about you making this into some sort of game?

ACTOR 1
I don't have a therapist.
...
...
...

ACTOR 4
So what you just write down your dreams
and hope for the best?

ACTOR 1
Basically.

ACTOR 5
Can I read one?

ACTOR 1
Yeah,
of course.
Anyone you'd like.

ACTOR 2
Wait, wait, wait
just so I know the rules.

ACTOR 1

The reader reads a dream
and then the reader
chooses a target
and asks the target to interpret it.
If the reader likes the target's interpretation
that person gets a point.
If they don't like it,
then...
Does that make sense?

ACTOR 3

Completely.
...
...
And I can choose anyone in this room?

ACTOR 1

Yes.

Actor 5 has been looking through all the notebooks and then finds one they like.

ACTOR 5

Oh,
ok...
I like this one
You guys ready?

ALL

Ready!

ACTOR 5

Ok:
Fuck...You have the worst handwriting...
Ok
Um:
I had a dream last night
that
while driving through Danville
my mom asked me
if I had brushed my teeth
and I said
no not yet.

...
...
My mom
went to the pharmacy's check out counter
and I went with her
then remember I wanted listerine
so I doubled back to the mouth wash
and then she joined me
and got the really big Colgate total health that was green
even though I wanted the pink one.
I then walked into someone's hotel room.
An older man
and my mom
and sister
followed me in
I said hi
and talked to the man for a bit
and then my mom
and my sis said LETS GO.
But I didn't get up.
And then I told the man
I needed to brush my teeth
and he said ok
while gently carressing my back.
He turned on the water in the sink
and then as I bent down to spit
HE RAMMED HIS FINGERS UP MY ASS!
I screamed rape.
Then my sister walked in and stared at us.
And I woke with a sore ass.
Did a ghost rape me?
...
...
...
Ok, interpret.

Actor 5 looks at the audience, their target.

They wait for a very long time for someone to answer. Perhaps someone does? Perhaps they don't.

Everyone laughs.

ACTOR 3

I want to go!

Actor 3 looks through the notebooks and picks one up and begins to awkward read from it

ACTOR 3

Ok ok my turn:
...
...
...
Had a dream
where rachel
me
and peter
were drinking.... *
Peter offered to drive,
he drove off the road once
and I was the only one who noticed
(he was texting and driving). *
Then as we were on the highway
(it was a weird highway: *
i
noticed peter had driven off the road again.
This time almost off a hill.
I stopped him before we fell off a deep cliff.
We parked the car
and went inside Rachel's
which we walked to.
Can't remember what we all did once inside
but when we wanted to leave again,
rachel looked really nervous
like she didn't want to go
and was about to cry.
I said he was just a little tipsy *
and had taken sodium nitrate
(I think I was trying to allude to poppers,
which are amyl nitrate
but I don’t think my subconcious knows the difference, lol)
and rachel said no.
She had taken sodium. *
... *
...

...
Ok, interpret.

They look at the audience, their new target, for an incredibly long time. Perhaps someone says what they think, perhaps not.

ACTOR 1

Ok
Ok
Ok
Let me read you one from last night.
...
...
...
Had a dream that I was in an episode of Louis.
There was weird infomercial On for a workout tape
in the style of Suzanne summers
that precluded the episode.
Then It started with a transgender vegan cop
being married to WNBA star Britney Griner
and his troubles
with his newfound pregnancy.
Then I went to my moms house
and my sister came over
and we all decided to sleep in bed
for old time's sake
and then I went downstairs to the bathroom
and while I was peeing
I heard a scream
and commotion
like a murder had happened.
Then when I came out of the room
my mom said my sister was gone.
I went to the roof to find her
and all the neighbors
pointed their guns at me
and asked why I did it.
I said I didn't.
Then another neighbor
shot the guy who did it
and found my sister dead.
I mourned her deeply, *
I was also mean to everyone who came by
and said they were a friend looking for something they left *

Then my sister came to me as a ghost
and told me I should move on.
I picked up something
and went to my car
and wiped away my tears.
Then it cut to a behind the episode thing
where Kristin wiig
and Louis started explaining the idea
then I woke up.
...
...
Ok, interpret.

Everyone looks at the audience except Actor 2 and Actor 4 who say after time:

ACTOR 2

Well its obvious, no?

ACTOR 4

Completely.

ACTOR 1

What is?

ACTOR 4

Your subconscious.

ACTOR 2

Well,
Let's begin with the workout tape.
In the style of "Suzanne Summers".
Suzanne Summers,
a model who's star was high in the 80s
yet took a harsh decline in the 90s
and was known as an object of sexual desire by many
teenage boys well into her late adulthood?
...
...
Your mother was a model, no?
In the 80s?
Until '89
when you were born?

ACTOR 1

Yes...

ACTOR 4

See...

ACTOR 2

Exactly.
So your mother is in the forefront of your mind
right now
as you enter into a moment
of becoming a self-conscious auteur.

ACTOR 1

Au-
teur?

ACTOR 4

A sort of solipsistic artist
whose ego is so great they begin to make stylistically stagnant
work that is undeniably theirs
and therefore the contributions of collaborators are muted
and everyone sees the solipsist
as a genius and sole creator.

ACTOR 1

I don’t want that...

ACTOR 2 *

Louis C.K. *

ACTOR 4 *

SEX OFFENDER! *

Actor 5 begins to whisper sex offender beneath * *
the following explanation to Actor 2. *

ACTOR 2

We’ll get to that in a second... *
Louis C.K.

You conflate your own identity with his
by placing yourself in an episode
wherein Britney Griner a
female basketball player
who rides the line between masculinity and
femininity *
and even flirted with playing with the men
acts as another surrogate you.

Actor 5 throws a dress to Actor 1. *

ACTOR 1

Wait what?

ACTOR 2

Gender nonconformity.

ACTOR 1

What?

ACTOR 2

You both exist comfortably on the same space
in the trans spectrum, babe.

ACTOR 1

Wait, no.
I'm not trans.

ACTOR 2

Well, tell that to your subconscious.
...
...
Anyway.
Then the story recenters around your mother.
And your Oedipal relationship to her.
By putting you in bed with her and your sister.
Who you envy?
No?
Because she lacks your ambition
and therefore
can comfortably suck on your mother's teet
by her side
in her bed
while you are off
being an auteur.

ACTOR 1

I don't think that's what it means.

ACTOR 2

So you kill her.
In cold blood.
You kill her
and you hide it.
Like Serial.
That podcast.
Just like Serial.

ACTOR 1

None of this was in the podcast.

ACTOR 2

We're not talking about a podcast.
We're talking about a dream.
One you had.

ACTOR 4

The point is
it's obvious.
You wanted us to know
by telling us this dream
that you have an Oedipal fantasy
about your mother
that has led to you holding onto guilt
for having psychically
committed sororicide.
Put on the dress silly. *
*

ACTOR 2

This is made abundantly clear
after unpacking the first
and second dream.
The first, in which your mother
once again
invades your subconscious
but this time to tell you to "brush your teeth". *
*

ACTOR 4

To prepare.

ACTOR 2

Oedipal.
Exactly. *

Actor 4 pulls out Colgate mouthwash and puts it *
in Actor 1's mouth. *

ACTOR 4

To brush your teeth
and then she rapes you.

After telling you to use the
GREEN colgate mouthwash *
instead of the pink.

Actor 1 gargles then spits on the floor. *

ACTOR 1
What does the green colgate mouthwash mean? *

ACTOR 4
And this is where the Louis C.K. *
“sex offender” thing *
comes back. *
She forces you to repress your pink
in favor of the green because all you ever really *
wanted was your father *
To anally penetrate you like your mother does in the dream. *
And as he probably did to her in real life. *

ACTOR 2
It’s so obvious.

ACTOR 4
So obvious.

ACTOR 3
Very much so.

ACTOR 5
I concur.

ACTOR 2 *
Which is the saddest thing about this whole enterprise *
darling, *
dear... *
because THAT is so depressingly *
Freudian that it’s clear *
that your subconscious has nothing special to say. *
It’s empty of anything but the psychological mathematics *
of a coke-addicted white man. *
*

The other actors clap. Impressed. *

ACTOR 1

Fuck.

...

... *

Well, KMS. *

ACTOR 5 *

KM-what? *

ACTOR 1 *

KMS. *

Kill Myself. *

ALL BUT ACTOR 1

(a toast)

Ah!!!! *

KMS! *

Actor 2, 3, 4, and 5 hit their glasses together. *
And then look down into their teacups, *
concerned. *
*
Actor 1 looks over at them. *

ACTOR 1 *
I'm so sorry. *

Actor 2, 3, 4, and 5 die. *
*
Actor 1 looks to them. Actor 1 picks up two *
spoons into their hands and puts them into their *
eyes and plucks them both out.

Actor 1 expressionless, bleeds out. Then they *
turn and begin to clean up the living room set, *
blinded and tries to set everything back to *
neutral for top of show.

They bring out the table and place the microphone where it belongs. The place a new glass and a new bottle of Pellegrino. They bring out the toy gun.

Actor 1 stands up. Blind. Completely. They begin to rip and paw at their clothes. Until they are only in their underwear. Then they put both hands on either side of their face and begin to laugh, then cry, then shiver, then cry again, then scream.

And SCREAMMMMMM!!!!!

And SCREAMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!!!!!!

Actor 2, 3, 4, 5 are revived. They look up and *
over at Actor 1. *

Actor 2 walks over and sets Actor 1 behind the desk.

Actor 2 goes to Actor 3...they go off and wait to enter. *

They wait.

And wait.

And wait.

And wait. *

BLACK OUT

RUMINATION IN THE DARK #5 *

This should last for the remainder of the 45 minutes.

END OF PLAY